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ABSTRACT

A reading curriculum for adult learners is described, offering guidelines for instruction at three levels of reading equivalency (nonreader to third grade, third through sixth grade, and sixth through ninth grade). The curriculum is designed to help adults develop skills in reading, writing, mathematics, and studying in the content areas. After summaries of significant aspects of the approach used in the curriculum, lessons for each instructional level are outlined, with comments on entrance requirements and suggested instructional techniques. A list of selected classroom reading materials and a list of paperback books are attached. (RL)

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New York City Community College
Division of Continuing Education

# ADULT LEARNING CENTER AND READING ACADEMY

## CURRICULUM

Developed by Gregory Donaldson and Bonne T. August
with the assistance of Linda Brown, Eleanor
Paull, and John Mogulescu

December, 1979

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NEW YORK CITY COMMUNITY COLLEGE
DIVISION OF CONTINUING EDUCATION & EXTENSION SERVICES

Adult Learning Center and Reading Academy Curriculum

This curriculum was developed by staff of the Learning Center and the Reading Academy, adult basic education programs administered by New York City Community College, Division of Continuing Education. An outgrowth of over eight years combined experience in adult basic education, the curriculum was designed to meet several major educational needs of our adult students:

- To develop the students' reading, writing, mathematics, and learning skills.
- To introduce information, vocabulary, and concepts basic to progress in the content areas.
- To increase the students' competence in essential life skills.

The programs offer classes on three levels: non-reader to third grade, third through sixth, and sixth through ninth or pre-high school equivalency. In order to provide a sequence of instruction in basic skills through the three levels, to assure a familiarity with a range of basic information in history, science, geography, literature, and life skills, and to provide for review and reinforcement while avoiding unnecessary repetition and duplication of lessons, the staff has developed this curriculum.

The approach to adult basic education taken by the Learning Center and the Reading Academy assumes a broad definition of basic skills for adult students and favors certain instructional techniques as being most effective for our students. Some significant aspects of this approach are summarized below:

Decoding: On the entrance level, letter sounds and blends are taught within the context of meaningful word groups and, whenever possible, as part of reading selections arising out of real life problems or situations. On the mid and upper levels, syllabication and letter sounds are reviewed and taught to students on an individual basis. Although good readers do not consciously rely on phonetic rules for meaning, there is value in reinforcing these skills as tools to build confidence and accuracy.

Content Areas: Specific areas of information, as well as narrowly defined skills, are included in the curriculum because adult basic education students are often hampered in their reading comprehension and in their performance on standardized tests by a lack of familiarity with the concepts discussed.

Affective development: The students' attitude toward reading, their confidence, and their curiosity are crucial to success in improving comprehension. The cultivation of interests and development of reading habits constitute a major part of the programs. Among the activities which contribute to this development are assignment of guided outside reading, class discussion of reading and current events, reading and attending plays, and teaching units based on themes such as working, the Depression, or Black history. Additional activities are outlined in the curriculum.

Real Materials: At all levels in the Learning Center and the Reading Academy, the primary instructional materials are chosen from real life reading--the students' own experience stories and essays; books, newspapers, and magazines; and instructions, directions, labels, and forms. Teachers are expected, as a major part of their responsibility, to locate, develop, introduce, and reinforce the use of such materials. Texts and kits are used to supplement the real life materials and as reference and resource materials (see attached list of Selected Materials).

Group Instruction: Group instruction leads many times to a natural open classroom where an exchange of ideas allows students to learn from each other and to develop interpersonal skills that might be neglected in a heavily individualized system. Encouraging student interaction results in a more complete educational experience for adult learners and improves attendance.

Professional Staff: Instruction in the Learning Center and the Reading Academy is provided by experienced teachers. Even at the earliest level, students benefit from the stimulation, interchange, and support of small group instruction and from the overview of the reading process a professional teacher brings to the class.

Individual attention is a crucial aspect of instruction for adult non-readers, however; and at this stage of development, tutors, under close supervision of a professional teacher, may be effective in assisting students with the necessary repetition and drill.

The upper level students have somewhat different requirements including cultivation of interests and development of more sophisticated thought processes that are best provided directly by a professional teacher. On the upper levels, therefore, the time that would be required for professional staff to train and supervise tutors is better spent with small groups of students.

Life Skills: Most adult students have both long and short-range goals which involve greater competence and confidence in the use of essential life skills. In our experience, such skills are most successfully acquired when intensive practice in specific life skills areas is integrated into a program which develops the students' overall cognitive abilities. In this way the student acquires flexibility and confidence, and is more likely to remember and to put into practice the specific skills.

Introductory Level: 0-3 grade level

Entrance Requirements:

The entrance requirements for this level are minimal. In general, all that is needed is that the prospective student be able to function in a small group situation. On the introductory level we accept a limited

number of students with special problems. Since the programs have no ESL component at present, foreign speaking students whose reading level in their own language may exceed 3.0 are sometimes assigned to this level as an introduction to spoken and written English. Also a small number of mildly retarded students are accepted with special provisions for individual instruction.

Favored organization and technique:

Instructional techniques for this level include the use of tutors and a good deal of concentration on survival skills related to reading. Workshops and class trips are designed to help adult non-readers solve problems as a group and to deal with emotional and social problems which have arisen out of what for many of them has been a devastating disability.

There is a good deal of oral work done on this level to build confidence and to explore ideas and develop thought processes. It is crucial that students' curiosity and powers of analysis not be ignored and that their personal growth not be held to the pace of their reading development.

Lessons on this level can often be related to T.V. programs and areas of special interest to the class. An atmosphere of support and liveliness is especially important for the vulnerable adult learners who quite often have had negative school experiences.

I. Reading Preparation

- A. Concentration drills
- B. Listening drills
- C. Following directions
- D. Strengthening attention span

II. Cognitive development

A. Oral activities

1. listing by memory
2. retelling stories
3. sequence of events
4. discussion of character motivation in movies, T.V. or stories read aloud
5. main idea or message
6. analogies
7. cause and effect

B. Visual activities

1. comparisons - similarities and differences
2. arrangement by category
3. main idea of a graphic presentation

III. Decoding

A. Auditory discrimination
B. Visual discrimination
C. Alphabet
D. Concept of vowels and consonants
E. Recognition of vowel consonant combinations, blends, digraphs
F. Word recognition
G. Syllabication

IV. Experience sentences, paragraphs

V. Sight words

A. Survival words

1. caution, poison, danger, etc.
2. list of personal words derived from life situations
3. days, months, holidays
4. names of pertinent agencies, geographical designations
5. writing and recognizing numbers

VI. Study skills

A. Organizing a notebook
B. Memory drills - association techniques
C. Building discipline
D. Budgeting time
E. Homework strategies

1. space
2. work habits

VII. Speech

A. Relaxation
B. Pronunciation

VIII. Lifeskills

A. Local geography
B. Phonebook
C. Classified

1. help wanted
2. apartments
3. merchandise

D. Knowledge of health services

1. child care

E. Law (rights when arrested)
F. Nutrition
G. Institutional systems
H. Family structure
I. Shopping lists
J. Budget
K. Menu
L. Credit
M. Job interviews, applications

IX. Writing

A. Spelling and dictation
B. Writing simple sentences
C. Experience stories
D. Controlled composition
E. Penmanship

X. Punctuation

A. Capitalization
B. Terminal punctuation

XI. Vocabulary

A. Articles
B. Context clues

XII. Grammar and sentence structures

A. Verb - subject
B. Concept of complete sentences
C. Modifiers
D. Introduction to conjunctions

XIII. Mathematics

A. Computation

1. addition of whole numbers
2. subtraction of whole numbers

B. Simple word problems

Level 2

Entrance requirements:

The entry requirement for new students at this level is a third grade reading level as assessed by a standardized reading test. Students who are transferred from the introductory level, in addition to a third grade reading level, must demonstrate the ability to write simple sentences, to apply principles of fundamental phonics, and to add and subtract whole numbers.

Organization and techniques:

On this level the instructor should assess student skills and knowledge identified on the Level 1 curriculum. If a student has entered Level 2 directly with a third grade reading level but without mastery of required skills, the instructor must be prepared to introduce Level 1 skills before beginning Level 2 curriculum.

On Level 2, group instruction is stressed. Lessons are aimed at developing skills and confidence that will enable students to become independent learners. Outside reading assignments and exposure to current magazines and newspapers as opposed to predigested workbook selections are basic to the goals of this level. There is a heavy emphasis on writing themes based on real problems, on correction of these themes and on student rewriting.

On this level class readings of playlets for oral reading competency and character analysis have proved effective. Also useful are group assignments and regular homework.

Since enrollment in the program is continuous, the teacher must develop a series of appropriate lessons based on the major objectives of this level and must present them in cycles with flexible groups comprised of new students and those who are in need of reinforcement or review of a particular skill.

I. Phonics - review of letter sounds and blends in relation to written work and dictation.

II. Word study

- A. Syllabication
- B. Prefixes
- C. Roots
- D. Suffixes
- E. Word families
- F. Context clues

III. Cognitive development

- A. Subordination
- B. Qualification
- C. Contradiction

D. Hypothesis
E. Cause - effect
F. Analogies

Areas of cognitive development are introduced in close relationship to sentence study: punctuation and sentence structure, and conjunctions are taught as keys to meaning.

IV. Sentence structure

A. Introduction of parts of speech
B. Phrases
C. Clauses
D. Pronoun reference
E. Paraphrasing
F. Identification of fragments

V. Paragraphs

A. Definition
B. Identification of topic
C. Identification of main idea and supporting details
D. Outlining paragraphs
E. Paragraph patterns

1. simple list
2. cause effect
3. time order
4. comparison

F. Writing paragraphs

1. sentence punctuation: capital letters and periods
2. indentation
3. organization of main idea and supporting detail

VI. Punctuation

A. Comma
B. Apostrophe

1. contractions
2. possessives

C. Italics
D. Quotation marks

VII. Usage

A. Double negatives
B. Plurals
C. Possessives
D. Then, than
E. Its, it's
F. The verb "to be"
G. Their, there, they're
H. Agreement of subject and verb

VIII. Reading skills

A. Inference
B. Skimming
C. Picking appropriate meaning from context

IX. Affective Development

A. Development of reading habits and tastes by exposure to literature, magazines, and newspapers.
B. Free reading

1. students suggest topics and develop strategies to find information and find answers to questions
2. reading with no class assignments to follow

C. Assignment of short novel for home reading
D. Going to a play as a class

X. Reference Skills

A. Identification and use of parts of a book
B. Use of card catalogue
C. Use of Encyclopedia
D. Interpretation of graphs

XI. Lifeskills

A. Introduction to reference materials for lifeskills

1. employment
2. consumer issues
3. family life
4. health

B. Identification and solution of life problems based on reading skills (e.g. written test for a driver's license, resume, reading medicine labels).

XII. Writing

A. Complete sentences
B. State and support a point of view in a brief paragraph
C. Write a journal (not to be corrected and perhaps not even read by instructor)

XIII. Information

A. Identification of literary genre

1. fiction - non-fiction
2. poetry
3. essay
4. short novel

B. Introduction to figurative language and idioms
C. Identification of study disciplines

1. biology
2. chemistry
3. geology
4. history
5. philosophy
6. religion

D. Introduction to anatomy
E. Geography
F. Current problems - newspaper

1. who
2. what
3. when
4. where

G. American history
H. Test taking

1. retrieving information
2. process of elimination
3. speed drills

I. Basic math

1. decimal system

a. reading large numbers
b. rounding off numbers

2. whole number operations

   a. review of addition and subtraction - examples and word problems
   b. multiplication

      1.) times tables
      2.) examples and word problems

   c. division - short and long

Level 3

Entrance requirements:

The entrance requirements include a 5.0 reading level on a standardized reading test. Students transferred from the intermediate level should have no major decoding problems and must be able to write short paragraphs, to perform whole number operations, and to show command of major areas of general information.

Organization and techniques:

The general objective of the third level of the Reading Academy/Learning Center is to develop reading and writing skills to the point at which students will be prepared to make a successful start in any one of a number of directions.

Upon completion of this level a student should be able to function in a GED preparation course; to pass examinations for entry level positions or qualify for training programs in a number of jobs requiring approximately 10th grade reading skills; or to enter college through a developmental skills program or through a preparation course like the College Adapter program.

The emphasis in this level is the development of reading desire, skills, and tastes. Students are encouraged to read books on their own for enjoyment and information. The aim is to prepare the student to be an independent learner and to allow access to information that will provide a context for new learning experiences. Reference skills are stressed as well as the cognitive ability that will help students evaluate the validity of written information.

Students are also prepared to summarize selections as well as to organize and write their own ideas in well supported essays.

It is also imperative that on this level students not be passed through to the GED preparation course until they have displayed competency in sentence structure, usage, reference skills, writing and general information.

I. Reference

A. Use of table of contents and index
B. Use of primary and secondary sources
C. Use of periodicals
D. Note taking
E. Research paper (see multi-media unit)

1. Evolution )
2. Depression ) - e.g.
3. Hiroshima )

II. Study skills

A. Skimming
B. Review
C. Outlining longer selections
D. Note taking from lectures

III. Sentence structure and meaning

A. Conjunctions
B. Clauses
C. Complex sentences
D. Paraphrasing
E. Pronoun reference

IV. Usage

A. Verb "to be"
B. Other irregular verbs
C. Perfect tenses
D. Possessives

V. Punctuation

A. Colon and semi-colon
B. Commas
C. Quotation marks

VI. Vocabulary development

A. Content vocabulary (see attached list)
B. Phonetic spelling
C. Foreign words and phrases
D. Connotation - denotation

VII. Comprehension

A. Main idea

1. cartoon
2. graph
3. paragraph
4. longer selection

B. Identification of patterns

1. cause - effect
2. comparison - contrast
3. simple list
4. time order

C. Voice - source of information
D. Fact - opinion
E. Supporting arguments
F. Recognize tone
G. Identify purpose
H. Author's point of view and general bias
I. Basic assumptions
J. Evaluation of evidence
K. Inference
L. Evaluation of author's conclusions

VIII. Cognitive development

A. Analogies
B. Inductive - deductive reasoning
C. Fallacies

1. non-sequitur
2. begging the question
3. argumentum ad hominem

IX. Writing

A. Business letter
B. Essay - state and support a point of view
C. Compare
D. Use direct quotations and reported speech
E. Controlled composition
F. Summarize a selection

X. Literature

A. Poetry

1. meter
2. poetic devices
3. figurative language

B. Short story

1. plot
2. theme
3. style
4. voice
5. perspective

C. Full length play (dramatic reading)
D. Short novel
E. Comparative works (newspaper or magazine articles on the same subject)

XI. Multimedia unit on choice of theme using

A. Records
B. Movie
C. Play
D. History
E. Text

XII. Content area

A. American History - Civil War to present

XIII. Life Skills

A. Goal setting

1. short and long range employment and education goals
2. individual time tables and resource lists

B. Consumer issues

1. leases and tenants' rights
2. guarantees and warranties
3. complaints

C. Employment

1. investigating sources of jobs and training
2. group practice of interviewing skills
3. workshops on employee rights and responsibilities

XIV. Mathematics

A. Review of whole number operations - speed and accuracy drills
B. Fractions
C. Decimals and percents
D. Signed numbers
E. Equations with one unknown

Adult literacy is not merely the decoding of words or the mechanical exercise of competencies, no matter how finely analyzed. Such essential skills are truly employable only by adults who have some understanding of the world they live in, of how things work, and of their own possibilities. The adults who complete our program successfully should have grown visibly in their ability to conceptualize and to express ideas and experiences, in the initiative and discipline they display toward learning, and in the level of their aspirations. We believe that the strongest contributions the programs make toward this growth come from the staff's comprehesive definition of literacy, from the interchange of small group instruction, from the structured exposure to literature, drama, and ideas, and from the supervised practice of life skills.

## Selected Materials

Level One (0-3 grade level)

| | |
|---|---|
| Steck-Vaughan | Practice in Reading |
| | Citizens Today |
| | Steps in Learning |
| | Working with Words |
| New Readers | Studying for a Driver's License |
| | Signs around Town |
| | Feelings Illustrated |
| | Pat King's Family |
| | Two for the Road |
| | Five Dog Night |
| | Label Talk |
| | We Honor Them |
| | This Is your Body |
| | Having a Baby Series |
| | When a Baby is New |
| | As A Child Grows |
| Fearon-Pitman | Bestsellers |
| | Vocational Readers |
| Readers Digest | Practice Pads |
| Book Lab | Hip Reader |
| Globe | Real Stories |
| | Rooftops |
| LINC | Ten Steps |
| Scholastic | Trackdown |
| Barnell Loft | Specific Skills Series |

Level Two (3-5 grade level)

| | |
|---|---|
| Globe | Real Stories 1, 2 |
| | World of Vocabulary |
| | Tales of Mystery and the Unknown |
| | Better Reading Workshop |
| | Stranger than Fiction |
| Readers Digest | Practice Pads |
| | Science Pads |
| | Social Studies Readers |

| | |
|---|---|
| Scholastic Scope | Trackdown, Survival |
| Xerox | Pal Readers |
| Grolier | Reading Attainment 1 & 2 |
| SRA | Reading 2A<br>Reading for Understanding |
| Scott-Foresman | Tactics in Reading A & B |
| Fearon-Pitman | Best-sellers |
| | New York Daily News |

Crowell Biographies - Malcolm X, Fannie Lou Hamer
Luke Was There - Eleanor Clymer
A Long Day in November - Ernest Gaines
Children'sBible
Dell Yearling books - Harriet Tubman, Frederick Douglas, J.T.

Level Three (6-8 grade level)

| | |
|---|---|
| Scott-Foresman | Tactics in Reading, II, III |
| Jamestown | Selections from the Black<br>Topics for the Restless<br>Reading Drills |
| Barrons | Modern Black Stories<br>405 Absolutely Essential Words |
| LINC | 26 Steps |
| Pocketbooks | Thirty Days to a More Powerful Vocabulary |
| Cambridge | Introduction to English |
| Houghton Mifflin | Grassroots |
| Scholastic | A Nation Conceived and Dedicated<br>Old Hate; New Hope<br>Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow<br>Between Two Wars |
| College Skills Center | 88 Passages |
| Steck-Vaughan | Basic Essentials of Mathematics |
| Allyn & Bacon | Refresher Mathematics |
| | New York Daily News |

Paperback Books

Big City Stories - ed. Cahill
Of Mice and Men - John Steinbeck
Inherit the Wind - Jerome Lawrence & Robert E. Lee
Animal Farm - George Orwell
Death of a Salesman - Arthur Miller
Down These Mean Streets - Piri Thomas
Sula - Toni Morrison
Manchild in the Promised Land - Claude Brown
I Am the Darker Brother - Arnold Adolf
The Soul Brothers and Sister Lou - Kristin Hunter
Daddy Was a Number Runner - Louise Meriweather
Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry - Mildred Taylor
Growing up Puerto Rican
Nilda
Lady Sings the Blues - Billie Holliday
Autobiography of Malcolm X - Malcolm X & Alex Haley
It's Not the End of the World - Judy Blume
Forever - Judy Blume
The Good Earth - Pearl Buck
Black Boy - Richard Wright
American Hunger - Richard Wright
Native Son - Richard Wright
I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings - Maya Angelou
The Best of Simple - Langston Hughes
Simple's Uncle Sam - Langston Hughes
Sounder
Albizu Campos, Puerto Rican Revolutionary
Nigger - Dick Gregory
If Beale Street Could Talk - James Baldwin
Autobiography of Miss Jane Pittman - Ernest Gaines
Mr. & Mrs. BoJo Jones - Ann Head
Stories from the Twilight Zone
Hey, Dummy
Cornbread, Earl, and Me
The Me Nobody Knows
Your Self - Grace, Nicholson, Lipsitt